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ABSTRACT

Outside the academic ranks, little is known about advances being made in the field of reading instruction. This guide has been prepared by the International Reading Association to help local councils publicize the work being done in reading and to cultivate public understanding and support of this work. Discussions of newspaper, radio, television, and other types of publicity are provided. In addition, attention is directed toward the message to be communicated, news releases, photo captions, feature stories, mayor's or governor's proclamations, and radio spot announcements. (KS)

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YOUR READING COUNCIL STORY AND HOW TO TELL IT ...

handbook

for council publicity

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CS 203 346

INTRODUCTION

Reading, obviously, is not news to the public . . . but reading as a profession is. Outside the academic ranks, little is known about advances being made in the field of reading instruction. This guide has been prepared by the International Reading Association to help local IRA councils publicize the work being done in reading. . . .to cultivate public understanding and public support of this work.

Publicity should be an important aspect of any council program. Why? Because it stimulates membership. Because it creates interests in educational circles in emphasizing reading instruction. Because it encourages boards of education and taxpayers to support reading programs in local and state school districts. And, finally, because it gives due recognition to the professionals who give their time and talents to advance the standards of reading instruction.

Consideration has been given to the fact that council officers have neither the time nor the inclination to be full-time public relations persons. This guide has been written simply, briefly, in a how-to-do-it manner to make publicity as relatively painless as possible. Some of the material may seem elementary; this detail, however, is necessary and should be observed carefully. Variations in the guide's recommendations will have to be made to suit local situations, but the background contained here, plus good rapport with local newspaperpersons and broadcasters, will assure your local council of its share of public exposure.

NEWSPAPER PUBLICITY

Newspaper coverage is the basis of any publicity program, and thus should be given first priority. Here are some suggestions for publicizing your council in your local newspapers:

Get to know local editors. Call on your local newspapers and introduce yourself to the editors. Discuss your role as publicity chairperson with them and find out their requirements, preferences, deadlines, etc. Explain the functions of your council and the basic information about the field of reading and reading instruction. Personal contact is important — not in the sense that the newspaper personnel will be more likely to do you any "favors" but rather that they will develop confidence in you and

in the accuracy of material which you submit to them. As stories develop, they will feel at liberty to call you for any needed information or photographs. As in any field, personal relationships are important here.

Work in advance. Most of the articles concerning council activities are predictable stories — you know in advance that they will be occurring. Many, in fact, can even be written in advance. Do as much advance publicity work as possible and let your newspaper editor have the articles as far in advance as possible. An article turned in 24 hours before deadline is much more likely to be displayed prominently than is an article turned in one hour before deadline.

Forget "pride of authorship." Accept the fact in advance that your article will probably be changed by the newspaper. Some of the facts may even be jumbled in the final version, and much of what you feel is important may be eliminated entirely. If a serious error has been made in the printed version, call and bring the discrepancy to the editor's attention. But don't — repeat, don't — complain about editorial changes in your story. And by all means don't make the mistake of asking to see a copy of the story before it goes to press!

Make yourself and your associates available. If a newspaperperson indicates a desire to write a feature story about council activities or to cover a council meeting, lay out the red carpet. Give whatever assistance is needed — when it is needed. Provide source material; introduce any persons to be interviewed; make the work as simple as possible.

Be accurate. Nothing will bring a publicity program to the proverbial "screeching halt" faster than inaccurate releases. Make sure your dates, places, and names are correct and complete — even to middle initials of persons' names. If you release a speech in advance, call the paper after the speech is delivered and tell them it was delivered; report that the quotations contained in your release either were given as reported or were changed. If newspaper editors learn they can rely on what you submit, they'll give it proper consideration. But if you report on a meeting that did not occur you're likely to find future publicity efforts unproductive.

Write articles in newspaper style. This guide contains sample news releases for a very good reason: the style used in news writing differs markedly from that followed in other forms of writing. If your copy is in a form that requires little changing by the editor, it will enjoy a better reception than copy which requires extensive rewriting. Analyze the sample news stories — note that the writing is "tight," that unneeded adjectives are eliminated. Note how the entire story is told in the lead, that the details are developed in a logical fashion below the lead, that the background material at the end of the article can be eliminated entirely if necessary without making the article incomplete. "Feature" articles differ from "news" articles in many respects. Read the feature article contained in the guide, and consider releasing similar ones to area newspapers.

Keep appearance in mind. News releases do not have to be submitted on bond paper, but they should be neat and presentable. Type your name and address at the top along with the release date and time. Then, double spacing your copy, type the release below correctly, without errors or misspellings. Always give the editor an original copy — if you are servicing more than one newspaper, don't make the mistake of giving one a carbon copy. It may take an extra 15 minutes to type another copy, but the time is well spent.

Newspaper Drop-in Ads

Some newspapers, especially weeklies, are willing to make available small amounts of advertising space to "drop-in" ads. You may have recognized these as illustrations promoting the Cancer Crusade, Christmas Seals, etc. The same treatment may be given your council message — through the suggested drop-in ad provided with this guide. Included in this handbook is a repro proof of a drop-in ad which you may submit to a local newspaper.

**Everyone
has the
right to
read...**

**Yet millions are
illiterate.**

For information on how
you can help improve
reading instruction and
aid your community
in developing lifelong
reading skills and in-
terests write:

IRA

Place local council
name and address
in this space

Newspaper Photographs

A discussion of newspaper photographs could logically be included under "newspaper publicity," but IRA feels special emphasis should be placed upon them. It may seem out of character for an organization devoted to reading to insist that "a picture is worth a thousand words," but for publicity's sake, we must acknowledge that photos are important.

Use them for publicity on any occasion which offers a photographic opportunity. As mentioned elsewhere, the engagement of a speaker for a future meeting may permit you to get a photo of the speaker in the newspaper. Similarly, the installation of council officers suggests a photo of the retiring president handing a gavel to the incoming president. Window displays, special reading instruction, new books being presented to the library — all of these can, with the editor's permission, be illustrated photographically.

Some things to keep in mind about photographs and newspapers:

1) If the newspaper editor will not send a photographer, you may offer to hire a professional photographer for the job. The kind of picture you have in mind, however, might not be used — no matter who takes it — so talk to the editor before spending the money for a professional. 2) Do not necessarily assume because you are able to take snapshots they will be the quality needed for newspaper reproduction. Polaroid photographs, for instance, will usually not be acceptable.

Try to make the subject of photographs as interesting as possible. Some newspapers will not take check passing or gavel passing pictures; others will use them. Newspapers increasingly are avoiding the use of pictures from stock situations, and would prefer knowing about activities where stimulating and worthwhile photographs could be taken. Every newspaper has its own guidelines on what pictures will be suitable and what pictures will not: the best possible solution is to find out your local newspaper's practices.

Elsewhere in the guide is a detailed discussion of caption-writing as well as sample photographs. You don't have to copy these precisely, but you may find them useful for ideas in staging photographs for your council.

RADIO PUBLICITY

Radio stations are often just as cooperative as newspapers but their requirements are entirely different. If you learn what the stations want, you'll enjoy much more success in "placing" news stories and general messages.

You'll find four basic opportunities for publicity in radio:

1) news announcements, 2) meeting notices, 3) interviews and panel discussions, and 4) public service spot announcements. Let's take a look at each of these:

News announcements. These are similar to the news articles prepared for newspapers except for one important difference — they're shorter. Tell your story in two or three good, factual, crisply-written paragraphs. Remember, in a five-minute newscast, you're competing with reams of local, national, and international news. You can't expect the entire five minutes to be devoted to your article, regardless of how important you think it is. So be brief.

Meeting notices. Many stations (but not all) carry "calendar of events" type programs. These are a series of announcements of meetings scheduled in the community. Find out if your local stations have features of this sort. If they do, advise them of your council meetings well in advance.

Interviews and panel discussions. The use of programs of this sort varies among stations; some have a strict music and news format while others emphasize talk shows. If stations are receptive to interviews and panel discussions, try to interest them in programs on council activities and on reading subjects of interest to the public. If visiting speakers are in town for council meetings, try to get them interviewed on the local stations.

Public service spot announcements. These are similar to "commercials" which are purchased by local business, but are carried by the stations without charge for worthy civic ventures such as a council. Suggested announcements appear in this guide; retype them and try to interest your local stations in broadcasting them.

When newspaper publicity was discussed, the importance of a personal relationship with the editors was stressed. This is equally important in

radio publicity. Get to know your local newscasters well — you'll be contacting them directly about news releases. Usually, one person at the station is in charge of the "calendar of events" show. Address your meeting notices to this person so that the council meeting is accurately reported. Interviews, panel discussions, and public service spots may be handled by someone else, depending on the station. You will probably be working with the station manager or the public affairs director. Regardless of the persons involved, meet them. . . get acquainted with them and their requirements. . . and develop your promotional efforts to fit their needs.

TELEVISION PUBLICITY

Television coverage is more similar to radio than to any other medium. By all means, include local commercial stations in your list of contacts, but don't overlook the educational stations either. Educational TV audiences are growing, and the station formats are well suited to the type of material you have to offer.

As far as the type and form of material are concerned, the same "rules" apply to television as to radio. . . with a couple of notable exceptions. Photographs, of course, can be used on TV. Whenever possible, matte finish photos (as opposed to glossy photos which are preferred by newspapers) should be provided the stations. If, however, a glossy print is all you have, give it to the station. Second, your council may be called upon to provide artwork if you ask the station to run public service spots. Be sure to get all the details — size requirements, colors, etc. — before you start to prepare the material.

OTHER PUBLICITY

Billboards

Billboards, or "outdoor advertising" as it is termed in the industry, is not as farfetched for a local council as it might first appear. Often, billboard companies will make boards available during slack periods. Also, commercial advertisers will sometimes give an organization such as a council the use of their boards for a period.

In these cases, it is up to you to provide a sketch of the message to be presented on the board. Your council may be asked to pay a "posting" charge, which will include the production and application of the poster.

Call on your local outdoor advertising company and discuss this possibility with a representative. Find out if your council might have the use of a board or boards on a "public service" basis — but also find out how much it will cost.

Window Displays

Window displays in stores, offices, bank lobbies, doctors' offices, public buildings and schools are a very worthwhile publicity activity. Photographs of council activities, maps, graphs, etc., can make a very interesting display, calling attention to reading and the objectives of your council.

Choose a theme and design your display around it. You might use the theme "Reading for All" and show photographs of people in every age group reading, then describe how your council works with each of these groups. You might also use the theme "Where Can I Find Books in Our Community?" and indicate on a map where libraries, bookstores, and other sources of books can be found. There are many ideas to choose from, and with some ingenuity most can be prepared inexpensively.

As a suggestion, assign a council member to this project alone. Ask him or her to canvas all local businesses and ask if each will give your council the use of a window or part of a window for a two-week period. The mathematics are simple: if you can line up 26 such businesses, you'll have a year-round display promoting reading instruction and your council.

THE MESSAGE

Up to this point, we've discussed the media to be used — the vehicles for carrying the council message. But what is the message we want carried? As you get more familiar with publicity and publicity opportunities, many ideas will occur. Here are several suggestions:

Special Events

Special events is a broad term which could include conventions, public programs, and other activities of community-wide interest. One special event you might undertake is "(area name) Reading Week." Such an observance gives you an opportunity to tell your story and to enlist the services of local media in telling it. The fact that this is a local observance — initiated by your reading council — makes it an appropriate occasion for statements about reading from local officials, special displays in local offices or businesses, and other activities centered around reading. In other words, *Reading Week* in itself can become a reason for talking about reading — and for encouraging others to talk about it, too.

Here's what we recommend for your *Reading Week*:

News releases. You'll find in the news release section suggested releases about *Reading Week*. Localize these as suggested on the releases and give them to your editors and newscasters.

Radio spot announcements and interviews. These can be produced "in observance of *Reading Week*" and can give the basic message of the council.

Window displays and billboards. Used as recommended in the preceding sections, these can be placed more effectively by approaching companies with an appeal for coverage "during and after" this observance.

Regular Council Activities

There are a number of events in the course of the council year that lend themselves to publicity. They probably will not be covered by the press unless you take the initiative and bring the information to the attention of the press. Here are several examples:

Formation of council. This, obviously, will be of interest only to new councils. For those, however, the occasion should not be overlooked for it gives an excellent opportunity to tell the overall story of professional reading instruction and the strides being made in our field. A suggested news release included in the guide will be of assistance in preparing this article for local release.

THE MESSAGE continued

Election of officers. This event is always news. Timeliness is, however, important. Provide the newspaper with a complete release (similar to the sample release in this guide) and with a photograph of the "most significant" officer elected. If your council organization consists of president, vice president, etc., the newly-chosen council president will be the person whose photograph accompanies your release. If the principal election is for the president-elect, who automatically becomes president a year hence, then that person's photograph should be featured. It may be possible, if nominating committee reports are available, to provide the editor with the article in advance and to give a confirming telephone call after the election. If this is not feasible, deliver the article to the newspaper and radio and TV stations as soon after the election as physically possible.

Installation of officers. If this is performed on a date different from that of the election, take advantage of this occasion for additional publicity. Include a recap of the new officers and try to get a photograph published showing the new president being installed, receiving a gavel from his/her predecessor, or otherwise assuming the new position.

Council meetings. Each council meeting normally gives an opportunity for two articles — an advance article stating that the meeting will be held and indicating the business to be conducted, and a follow-up article telling what went on at the meeting. This will require a certain amount of discretion on your part, for obviously much of the "internal" business of the council is of no interest to the public or the editor. If a speaker will address the meeting, you may wish to feature the speech in both the advance article and the follow-up coverage. Use a photograph of the speaker, if possible, with the advance story, and quote liberally in the follow-up article. It will simplify your work and that of the press if the speaker uses a prepared text and supplies you (at your request) with a copy of that text before the meeting. Discuss the meeting with the local newspaper editor, who may be receptive to your reporting the speech or may wish to have a reporter write the article based on the speech. Sample releases on these subjects are contained in this guide.

Conventions or workshops. As far as publicity is concerned, these meetings are covered in much the same manner as council meetings — with advance stories and follow-up reporting.

External Events

These activities are those conducted outside the framework of the council, such as speeches before service clubs, panel discussions for public consumption, etc. These events are by their very nature excellent opportunities for publicity. Here are some suggestions:

Community speeches. Interesting programs are in continuous demand by virtually all board-based community organizations — service clubs, women's organizations, civic groups, etc. All it takes is some preparation by one or more competent council

speakers, a letter to the organizations, and then publicity on the event. With the consent of the organization at which the speech will be given, give the local press an advance article with a photograph of the speaker and follow up the speaking engagement with a copy of the speech or, preferably, a finished news story about the speech.

Panel discussions. Publicize these discussions in advance in the same manner as community speeches. The follow-up coverage, however, must be "live." Obviously, you won't know in advance what the participants are going to say — so you must be on hand to record and report what they do say.

Several considerations must be observed in the conduct of any panel discussion. First, the subject must be one with which the participants are familiar — "programs on first grade reading," "the traditional approach to reading versus new concepts in reading education," etc. Second, the subject must be one in which the public is interested. You can safely assume, for example, that the average person is not concerned with the semantics of the profession — that person couldn't care less whether you are called a "reading teacher" or a "specialist in reading instruction." What is of concern is the effect your work will have on each family. If you can relate the subject to nonprofessionals — "How New Approaches to Reading Will Help Our Children," for example, you'll have an audience. You may wish to consider such subjects as "How Parents Can Help Their Children Learn to Read," "How Volunteer Reading Tutors Can Help in Community Programs (Head Start, etc.)," "The New Program in Reading in our Community," and "How High School Reading Programs Help Our Children in Later Life."

NEWS RELEASES

The sample news releases included in this section will suggest ways of giving your local daily or weekly newspaper editor the *who, what, when, where, and why* of an International Reading Association council event.

In studying these samples, notice that the lead paragraphs are brief, that they summarize the main facts of the stories, and that the stories themselves are organized according to the "pyramid" style preferred in newswriting — that is, that succeeding paragraphs progressively amplify the facts stated briefly in the lead. There are two principal reasons for organizing news stories this way 1) the reader who reads only the lead will still get the basic story, while the reader who reads the entire story will get added information; and 2) if the newspaper compositor has to trim your story to fit the space available for it, it will be cut from the bottom upward — so the pyramid structure will leave the main facts of your story intact if the length has to be cut. (Pyramid organization also helps the radio or TV reporter, who usually has time for only the first one or two paragraphs.)

Keep your sentences and your paragraphs short and to the point. Never pad your story to make it seem more important than it really is — newspaper editors never waste space, and if you make them use the blue pencil too much, they may use the wastebasket instead. Your public information program will accomplish more for your IRA council if you write compact stories that get printed than if you compose lengthy essays which do not.

Preparing News Copy

Stories you send in to your local daily and weekly newspapers are more likely to get editors' approval if you prepare the copy the way they want it.

First, be sure every story has a heading that tells the editor briefly where it is from and what it is about. The heading should include a release date (which most editors will observe if it is timely), your name, and a telephone number where you can be reached if the editor wants more information. The heading may look like this:

Delaware Council SUBJECT: Council Sets Seminar
INTERNATIONAL RELEASE: Wed., Jan. 10, A.M.
READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

The "A.M." or "P.M." will allocate the story to your morning or evening daily paper, but *both* should get a copy of the story. (If you send copies to your radio and TV stations, they will break the A.M. story at 11 p.m. the previous evening and the P.M. story at 11 a.m. the same day). The release should be in the editor's hands about one day ahead of the release date, but not too far ahead or it may be misplaced.

Start your lead paragraph about two inches down from the heading. The editor will use the space to write a headline and give directions to the composing room on what to do with your story.

If your story runs more than one page, don't divide a paragraph between two pages, even if it means wasting a little space at the bottom of the page. When your story is set up in type for printing, separate pages may be given to different typesetters. If you split paragraphs between pages, it may confuse them.

News copy should always be double-spaced, but you may single-space the last few lines of your story's *final* paragraph if you can thus avoid adding an extra page to the story.

When there is more than one page, put the word (MORE) — just like that — at the bottom center of each page except the last. Mark the end of the story, wherever it comes, with some symbol that lets the editor know there isn't any more. You can use "the reporter's traditional" "-30-" or "-0-" or "*****" at the center of the page.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: New Council

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Council Sets Seminar

RELEASE: Wed., Jan. 10, A.M.

The newest unit in the 900-council International Reading Association is the _____ (name) _____ Reading Council, whose formation was completed last night with the election of the council's first president and other officers at _____ (place).

Chosen to head the new member council was _____ (president's name) _____, _____ (president's title or affiliation) _____. His/her one-year term begins officially July 1, but in this first year of the council's existence he/she will also serve during the interim.

Serving with him/her as president-elect will be _____ (president-elect's name) _____, _____ (president-elect's title or affiliation) _____. Also elected at last night's meeting were _____ (treasurer's name) _____, treasurer, and _____ (secretary's name) _____, secretary. _____ (President-elect's name) _____ will automatically succeed to the presidency of the council in July of next year. _____ (President's name) _____ received the gavel last night from _____ (temporary chairperson's name), _____ (temporary chairperson's title or affiliation) _____, who has headed the group as temporary chairperson during the past six months while they were recruiting members and qualifying for affiliation with the international organization. To qualify, the local council must have at least 10 members who are International Reading Association members and draft local bylaws for IRA approval. The _____ (council name) _____ adopted its approved bylaws last night.

The International Reading Association with 65,000 members is the major professional organization for classroom teachers, reading specialists, psychologists, administrators, librarians, parents and others interested in the teaching and improvement of reading. Most of its members are in the United States and Canada, but there are also councils and individual members in 70 countries around the world.

The (name) Reading Council will work to improve the quality of reading instruction and to encourage greater public interest in reading here in (place). Through IRA the local council will have access to a variety of periodical and occasional publications issued by the international group, and council members will participate in state, national, and international activities. At last night's meeting (name(s) of IRA delegate(s)) was (were) elected as the council's first delegate(s) to the Association's next Delegates Assembly. The Assembly, which governs IRA, meets during the International Reading Association's annual convention, to be held in May at (place).

Also elected at last night's meeting were nine directors who will join the council officers on the executive board and head the council's standing committees. The directors include (names and titles).

Membership in the council is open to parents and other individuals, as well as to persons professionally concerned with reading. Local council members are encouraged, though not required, to become members of the international association.

The (name) Reading Council will meet regularly three times a year--in the fall, winter, and spring. Other meetings, conferences, and seminars may occasionally be scheduled.

-30-

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Election of Officers

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: _____ Elected President

RELEASE: Wed., Jan. 10, A.M.

(Name of new president), reading instructor at (school or college),
last night was elected president of the (council name) Reading Council.

(Last name of president) succeeds (retiring president's name) as head of the
(number) -member council. The election was held at the (winter, spring, etc.)

Also elected at last night's meeting were (list name, professional affili-
ation, and office to which elected).

President (last name) has been active in the field of reading instruction for
(number) years. A graduate of (college), he/she joined the (school name) as
(position) in (year). In (date) he/she was named (position) at (school)...(con-
tinue with biography in this manner)....

(President's last name) also serves as (secretary, etc.) of the (name of orga-
nization),...(list professional and civic affiliations with titles of offices,
past and present)...

The (name of local council) is composed of reading teachers and other inter-
ested citizens from (name of area served by council). It is an affiliate of the
International Reading Association, a professional organization of classroom teachers,
reading specialists, psychologists, librarians, administrators, parents, and others
interested in the teaching and improvement of reading.

"We would like to encourage interested citizens from the _____ area to
join with the _____ Council in the furtherance of our local reading program,"
President (new president's last name) said. "Reading is a complex act that in-
volves more than the mere pronouncing of words. It includes the ability to under-
stand literal and implied meaning, to react critically to ideas that have been
read, and to be able to apply them in every day life.

"In today's changing world, which requires that people have up-to-date information, reading takes on more importance than ever. It is our hope that through the _____ Council, the students and adults in this area may be able to benefit from the vast amount of work going on in the reading field today."

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Installation of Officers

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: IRA Council Installs
RELEASE: Wed., Jan 10, A.M.

(photo and caption attached)

(Name of new president) was installed as president of the (council name) Reading Council last night in ceremonies at (site of installation).
(President's name), reading instructor at (school), succeeded (name of retiring president) as chief executive officer of the association. (President's name) was elected to the post in (month in which election was held).

Also installed at last night's meeting were the following officers and directors:
(list name, professional affiliation, and office to which elected).

President (last name) has been associated with the field of reading professionally for (number) years. A graduate of (college), he/she joined the (school name) as (position) in (year). In (date) he was named (position) at (school)...
(continue with biography in this manner)....

(MORE)

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Installation continued

(President's last name) also serves as (secretary, etc.) of the (name of organization)...(list professional and civic affiliations with titles of offices, past and present)....

The (name of local council) is composed of reading teachers and interested citizens from (name of area served by council). It is an affiliate of the International Reading Association, a professional organization of classroom teachers, reading specialists, psychologists, librarians, administrators, parents, and others interested in the teaching and improvement of reading.

-30-



NEW PRESIDENT--The new president of the Diamond State Reading Association, Sister Regina Haney, seated right, discusses future plans for the association with Jack Cassidy, outgoing president, as Mrs. Eleanor Thornton, state coordinator, looks on.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Council Charter

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Council Receives
Charter

RELEASE: Wed., Jan. 10, A.M.

(photo and caption attached)

The (name) Reading Council received its official charter from the International Reading Association last night at the first meeting since the council organized last (month). (Name), state coordinator for the (state) Reading Council, presented the charter on behalf of IRA to local council president (name).

The presentation of the charter moves the (name) Reading Council into a full round of local, national, and international IRA activities.

Here in (place), as well as on a grander scale, the International Reading Association is dedicated to improving the teaching and the pursuit of reading of both children and adults. Association publications and conferences reflect interest in teaching elementary, secondary, and college students to read well; but IRA has traditionally been equally interested in adult reading.

-30-



CHARTER RECEIVED--The newly-formed Diamond State Reading Association received its charter from the International Reading Association last night. Officers of the new group are: Mary Phillips, vice president; John Pikulski, secretary; Eleanor Roberts, treasurer; Margaret Justice, director; and Jack Cassidy, president.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Advance on Council Speaker

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Clymer Addresses Council

RELEASE: Wed., Jan. 10, A.M.

Dr. Theodore W. Clymer, nationally-recognized authority on reading, will be the featured speaker at the meeting of the _____ Reading Council on Monday evening.

The meeting will begin at _____ p.m. in the _____ Building. The public is invited.

(President's name), president of the _____ Council, said that Dr. Clymer will discuss "Implications of Research on Critical Reading and Thinking." He indicated the subject will relate to new programs in reading being inaugurated in the _____ (name of city) area schools.

Dr. Clymer, professor of education at the University of Minnesota, has served in the past as an elementary classroom teacher, supervisor in reading clinics, and as visiting professor at several universities.

Serving as president of the International Reading Association in 1964-1965, Dr. Clymer has held a variety of positions with the Association including member of the Board of Directors from 1961 to 1963, chairperson of the Studies and Research Committee, and member of the Program and Membership Committees.

An active member of the Minnesota Reading Association, he is coauthor of reading tests, reading textbooks, science textbooks, and many articles in professional journals. He has served as guest editor for many research issues of The Reading Teacher and editor of the Reading Research Quarterly, both journals published by the International Reading Association.

The _____ Reading Council is a local affiliate of the International Reading Association, an organization devoted to improvement of reading and reading instruction.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Follow-up Publicity

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Children's Critical
Reading

RELEASE: Tues., Jan. 16, A.M.

Children should be taught not only to read but also to question and evaluate as they read, members of the _____ Reading Council were told last night.

Dr. Theodore W. Clymer, a past president of the International Reading Association, told council members and guests that "critical reading" is extremely important for students in the primary grades as well as upper grades and urged the educators present to encourage this approach in their work.

"My hope is that we will teach our children to read and question and evaluate," Dr. Clymer said. "Because it's in a book is no reason for us to be sure a statement is true. Students should be led to question."

He cited various research studies which point up inadequacies in retention and critical analysis of material read, using these as examples to show the need for greater emphasis on critical reading.

In a study by E.L. Thorndike, according to Dr. Clymer, sixth graders were given a 56-word passage that described their school attendance requirements. The young students were asked to read the material and then answer questions on what they had read. The questions required the readers to select appropriate elements, put them together in proper relationships, and give each element the correct emphasis. The students made flagrant errors in their interpretations--although the subject was one with which they were personally involved.

"The task of evaluating and teaching critical reading skills is not easy," Dr. Clymer continued. "Our usual standardized tests can provide us with only a glimmering of the true critical reading ability of our students. A major avenue for evaluating these important reading skills will be teacher observation."

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE: Follow-up Publicity continued

He said the majority of situations for evaluating critical reading come during the regular school day as teachers observe reactions to questions, study the organization of reports, evaluate misconceptions, and correct the numerous seat work and independent assignments which are carried out in classrooms.

Dr. Clymer, a reading authority, suggested that critical reading can be improved by encouraging the documentation of opinions given by students in reports and by demonstrating that points of view influence the manner in which material is presented. Using newspaper sports pages as an example, he suggested reading accounts of a game in the home newspapers of both teams and comparing the accounts.

"You recognize critical reading as the zenith of all comprehension skills and you are constantly striving to find improved ways to develop critical reading abilities for the students that you instruct in reading," Dr. Clymer said. "You recognize critical reading as essential for our form of government. One of the major responsibilities of the citizenry of a democracy is to read, critically evaluate, and then determine a course of action."

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PHOTO CAPTIONS

A newspaper editor will always appreciate, although not always use, any photographs you may supply along with your news stories. Appropriate photos can help tell your story, and they can help the editor vary the layout of news pages, so you should add them to your stories whenever you can. Let the editor decide when to use your photos, but remember, when they are used, they will call special attention to your stories.

To encourage the editor to use your photographs, be sure to provide them with proper *captions*: the lines that are printed directly beneath the photos to briefly identify the people and the events they depict.

All the people who appear significantly in a photo should be identified by their full name and title, when their title is pertinent to the story. By custom, people are always listed from the reader's left to right as they appear in the photo. Remember that the photo will serve as an attention-grabber on the news page — the reader will almost invariably look at the photo *before* reading the story, especially if there are people in the picture, so the caption should tie the photo to the story. At the same time, the caption for a photo accompanying a story should be as brief as possible — don't try to tell the whole story in such a caption. Just link the photo to the story. With a head-and-shoulders photo of a speaker, for example, the caption may consist only of the person's name.

Sometimes, on the other hand, you can use a picture that doesn't accompany a story but that can appear on its own, with a slightly longer or "fat" caption. This approach will work well with a story-telling picture, one that shows people doing something or something happening. You can use the photo and fat caption best when you want to report something of interest but do not need to include a lot of details with the story.

For example, your council's window display chairperson may have arranged for a number of local businesses to show the display in their store windows and lobbies. You can help kick off the campaign, perhaps, with a photo showing your chairperson setting up the display with the owner, manager, or some other official of the firm looking on. The accompanying fat caption will identify both individ-

uals in the usual fashion and tell briefly what is going on in the picture.

Or, for another example, your state council may hold a convention. There will be, of course, one or more preconvention stories released to the press, but the meeting itself will offer further opportunities for publicity. A photo of people registering for the convention could be accompanied by a fat caption saying that the convention has begun at a certain place and will continue until a certain time, etc.

The fat caption will, of course, be longer than the conventional photo caption — but it should be no longer than a single paragraph. If the picture and one-paragraph caption cannot say all you want to say, write a full news story and put the more routine kind of caption on the photo. But don't neglect the possibilities of the photo plus fat caption. They offer the editor more variety for the page, and often they will be used when an ordinary news story might not.

The following examples demonstrate the differences in length and structure between the "normal" caption for a photo accompanying a story and the "fat" caption and photo that are not attached to any story.

Caption for Photo Accompanying Story on Council Programs.

PROGRAM PLANNERS — Dorothy Lewis (left), reading coordinator at Downes Elementary School, and Mark Williams, reading specialist at the University Reading Center, look into the future as program cochairpersons for the Suburban Reading Council. They will handle arrangements for the council's three meetings this year.

"Fat" Caption for a Photo that Tells Its Own Story. A TOTAL COMMUNITY COMMITMENT TO READING will involve 26 business firms and professional offices in the area served by the Suburban Reading Council. Walter Martin (left), branch manager of the Suburban Trust branch office at the Community Shopping Center, joins Mark Williams, council display chairperson, in setting up the council's display on "Total Community Commitment to Reading" which is this year's theme for the International Reading Association, the council's parent organization. The display will appear in the Suburban Trust lobby for two weeks before beginning its year-long round of community business locations.

SAMPLE FAT CAPTION AND PHOTO

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Reading Council Organizes

RELEASE: Immediately

(caption for attached photo)

COUNCIL ORGANIZES--Kay Hays, seated at right, and Pam Hoecker, standing, field consultants for the International Reading Association, explain the structure of the Association to area teachers organizing a local IRA council. Like the international organization, the newly-formed Delaware Council is composed of teachers, administrators, parents, and others interested in the improvement of reading and reading instruction. At present there are 25 members of the new council, which will receive its charter within the next few weeks. Plans for the coming year include sponsorship of a free tutoring service. There are 65,000 members of IRA in 70 countries. It publishes three journals: The Reading Teacher, Journal of Reading, and the Reading Research Quarterly.

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FEATURE STORIES

This sample feature story will suggest ways of varying your publicity for a particular event or of continuing your council's public information program between events.

Features differ from news stories. While they may deal with particular events, they don't have to. Instead, they may describe interesting aspects of the history of IRA or of your local council; they may discuss the nature and background of continuing projects your council may be pursuing; or they may call public attention to new advances or special problems in this teaching of reading. Feature stories, in fact, may be about almost anything concerning reading, IRA, or your local council, as long as they are both informative and interesting. All news writing should both inform and interest, but the emphasis

of the feature may be on interest: giving readers something new, unusual, or appealing that will hold their attention long enough to learn more about IRA, your local council, or reading instruction.

Brevity and compactness, however, are just as important in the feature story as in the news story. Your newspaper editor wants to entertain readers occasionally, but never to waste either their time or news space. With the feature you may depart from the typical pyramid structure of the news story, and you must try to catch the reader's attention for a moment -- but only for a moment. Keep it simple and keep it brief (the feature that runs much more than two typewritten pages probably will not get printed).

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: The "New" IRA

RELEASE:

The United States and Canada have long boasted about the freedom of passage that citizens of both countries enjoy across the unguarded frontier between them. Entering either country from the other usually requires only a moment's routine delay.

Recently, however, a Canadian IRA member, returning from a U.S. visit, found herself detained for close questioning by several grim-faced, Canadian immigration officers. They wanted to know just what she was carrying in the briefcase with the letters "IRA" printed on the outside.

To much of the English-speaking world, of course, IRA is the Irish Republican Army, so the Canadian officials were taking no chances until they were sure the briefcase was harmless.

(MORE)

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SAMPLE FEATURE STORY continued

Once the perspiring Canadian reading specialist realized the source of their confusion, she was able to explain that her IRA was the International Reading Association and that she was taking materials to a reading council meeting in Canada.

Even more recently, Dr. Ralph C. Staiger, IRA's Executive Director, found himself being treated warily by other delegates at a meeting of the World Confederation of Organizations of the Teaching Profession in Dublin. His chair in the conference room was marked "IRA," and Staiger had to explain to several dubious inquirers what the International Reading Association was and why he was there.

This IRA has in fact been quietly working for many years to effect an international revolution in the teaching of reading.

There's certainly no disputing IRA's international character. Although most of its 65,000 members are in 900 local reading councils scattered over all 50 states, the District of Columbia and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, IRA also has 26 councils in Canada and affiliates in 17 other countries. There are also members in 70 other countries around the world.

There's no need to think of IRA as a distant organization of no particular interest to Delaware. The Kent County Council, Sussex County Organization for Reading Excellence (SCORE), Top of the Blue Hen Council and Diamond State Reading Association function here in the state with a membership including classroom teachers, administrators, reading specialists, university professors and parents. And that's not all.

The Headquarters of IRA, with a staff of 50 who coordinate the Association's far-flung concerns, has been quietly, almost anonymously, at work since 1964 in Newark. Correspondence from all over the world flows in daily to Dr. Staiger and his staff, and a steady stream of IRA pamphlets, bulletins and professional journals flows out in return.

IRA was born from a 1956 merger of two organizations, the International Council for the Improvement of Reading and the National Association of Remedial Teaching. Now, as then, IRA's goals, though not always easy to attain, can be simply stated: to improve the teaching, learning and application of reading at all ages in all parts of the community.

Despite its phenomenally rapid growth and its unquestioned leadership among researchers and teachers of reading, IRA has never considered itself an organization with just one message. The Association functions as a clearinghouse for many different points of view on reading.

The Association keeps a wealth of information flowing out from Newark to its members through periodicals like The Reading Teacher, the Journal of Reading and the Reading Research Quarterly and a variety of other publications.

The annual International Reading Association convention meets in various parts of North America, and there is a world congress every two years somewhere around the globe. In the United States and Canada regional and state councils meet at least once a year, and local councils even more often.

Clearly, while it needn't concern border officials anywhere, or the Dublin police, a worldwide revolution in reading is afoot, and the new IRA--the International Reading Association--is riding high on reading's wave of the future.

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MAYOR'S/GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, the ability to read is the most fundamental and thus the most important aspect of our educational experience, and

WHEREAS, effective reading is essential to persons of all ages and all areas of endeavor as wage-earners and contributing members of society, and

WHEREAS, our concepts of reading and reading instruction are changing in step with changes in virtually every field of the sciences and the arts, and

WHEREAS, it is the duty of the citizens of _____ to make available to our children every feasible educational advantage and to show by example an intelligent approach to this facet of our daily lives, and

WHEREAS, it is every human's right to become a lifelong reader and to enhance intellectual growth and personal fulfillment, and

WHEREAS, the International Reading Association through its _____ Council is seeking to bring the children and the adults of this community such information and aid as is indicated to assist us in becoming more proficient lifelong readers, for both information and pleasure,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED that the week of _____ be hereby designated as _____ (state/city name) Reading week in our community and that the attention of our citizens be directed toward fitting observance of this significant occasion.

Mayor/Governor

(date)

SAMPLE RELEASE: Mayor's Proclamation

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

SUBJECT: Mayor Sets Reading Week

RELEASE: Immediately

(Name of city) mayor (name of mayor) today proclaimed (dates)
as Reading Week in (city).

Citing the importance of reading to children and adults alike, he/she joined with the (name of council) Reading Council in urging public recognition of the importance of reading and public participation in local programs of reading improvement.

"The ability to read is the most fundamental and thus the most important aspect of our educational system," Mayor (name) said. "Effective reading is essential to persons of all ages and all areas of endeavor as wage-earners and as contributing members of society."

The (city) official pointed out that concepts of reading and reading instruction are changing in step with changes in virtually every field of the sciences and the arts, and reminded parents that it is their duty to make available to their children "every feasible educational advantage" and to show by example an intelligent approach to reading.

"The International Reading Association through its (council name) is seeking to bring to the children and the adults of this community such information and aid as is indicated to assist us in becoming more proficient readers," the mayor continued. "Now therefore be it proclaimed that the week of (date) be hereby designated as Reading Week in our community and that the attention of our citizens be directed toward fitting observance of this significant occasion."

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RADIO SPOT ANNOUNCEMENTS

You will notice immediately that the radio spot copy which follows is typed entirely in capital letters ("all caps"), it is triple-spaced, and no words are divided at the ends of lines. This format is followed universally in the radio and television industries because there are many occasions when an announcer cannot hold the reading copy at a normal reading distance. Radio and television people are accustomed to this

format — so your spots (which you will be asking the station to carry free as part of their obligatory "public service" programing) will have a far better chance of being accepted and used if they are prepared in this manner. Here, as in all cases where you are seeking publicity, your best bet is to accommodate yourself to the customs and convenience of the press people whose cooperation you are seeking.

Delaware Council
INTERNATIONAL READING ASSOCIATION
John W. Doe
(302) 555-1212

60-second public service announcement

ASK YOURSELF THESE TWO QUESTIONS: OF THE READING MATERIAL AVAILABLE TO YOU, HOW MUCH DO YOU ACTUALLY READ?...AND HOW WELL DO YOU READ IT? REGARDLESS OF YOUR ANSWERS, YOU'LL PROBABLY AGREE THAT YOU COULD READ MORE...AND YOU COULD READ MORE EFFECTIVELY. THIS WEEK IS (area name) READING WEEK, AND THE (name of your council) TAKES THIS OCCASION TO URGE YOU TO IMPROVE YOUR READING SKILLS AND THOSE OF YOUR CHILDREN. THERE ARE MANY THINGS YOU CAN DO--PRIVATE STUDY, ADULT COURSES, SUPPORT OF BETTER STOCKED LIBRARIES, AND MORE COMPREHENSIVE READING PROGRAMS IN OUR SCHOOLS, TO NAME FOUR. IF YOU'D LIKE TO IMPROVE YOUR OWN READING SKILLS AND ADD YOUR VOICE TO THOSE IN SUPPORT OF BETTER READING INSTRUCTION, WRITE TO THE (name of your council) IN CARE OF THIS STATION. A WELL-READ COMMUNITY IS AN INTELLIGENT, PROGRESSIVE COMMUNITY. HELP MAKE THIS A WELL-READ COMMUNITY BY READING WELL YOURSELF.